

Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church Policy and Procedure Manual 2017

INTRODUCTION

This manual was developed in response to action of the 1997 annual conference session and has been revised by action of subsequent annual conference sessions. The purpose of this manual is to codify the conference and local church operational procedures of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The manual can be accessed through the conference website: www.minnesotauc.org. Conference leaders and local church officials are encouraged to read, review and refer to any parts of the manual that are applicable to their ministry area as they perform their responsibilities in the work of the church.

Sections amended by annual conference action will be noted every year in the conference *Journal* in the reports of applicable legislative action. Beginning in 2003, an ongoing composite list of amended sections and subsections with revision dates will be kept by the conference secretary. Each year the website will contain the full *Policy and Procedure Manual* as updated.

Each conference structure unit is urged to annually review those parts applicable to their ministry focus for any legislative action to be recommended to the annual conference.

The Minnesota Annual Conference will operate on the basis of *The Book of Discipline*, which is amended by action of the General Conference. "*The Book of Discipline*" will be abbreviated "*BOD*" throughout this document, when paragraph references are used.

Questions regarding this manual may be directed to the Conference Secretary or Director of Ministries.

AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this manual become effective upon a majority vote of those present and voting at the annual conference session.

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100. ANNUAL CONFERENCE

01. General

a. Purpose and Structure

The purpose of the annual conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church, all to the glory of God. (*BOD ¶601*)

Annual Conferences are permitted the flexibility to design conference and district structure in ways that best support the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ in an increasingly diverse global community. (*BOD ¶610.1*)

Every team and board needs to effectively assist the annual conference, local church and individuals in fulfilling our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and is asked to evaluate their work on an on-going basis by asking, “How are we intentionally reaching new people for Jesus Christ through our ministries?” and “How are we helping new people grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ through our ministries and areas of responsibility?” (*BOD ¶610*)

b. Vision

The Minnesota Annual Conference is engaged in an intentional Journey Toward Vitality with the aim of every congregation being a vital expression of the gospel imperatives to **grow in love of God and neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40); reach new people (Matthew 28:19-20) and heal a broken world (Luke 4:16-21)**. We do this because we believe Jesus is life and that the fullness of the resurrected Christ is discovered and lived out in vital Christian communities. Our baptismal promise is that we will be a community of love and forgiveness. The power of the early church was that people saw they were a transformed people and community, and that shaped how they lived and loved together. This is the church we are called to be in and for our world today.

The staff and resources of the annual conference are focused on increasing our capacity in four key areas:

- Equipping Missional Congregations
- Developing Missional Leaders
- Generating Missional Resources
- Extending Missional Impact

The Extended Cabinet, which consists of the Bishop; District Superintendents; Director-Level Staff; and Lay Leader(s), is the strategic leadership team for the annual conference.

02. Annual Conference Session

a. Equalization Formula

- 1) Clergy Membership: (*BOD ¶ 602.1*)
 - a) Deacons and elders in full connection (*BOD ¶ 333*)
 - b) Provisional members (*BOD ¶ 327*)
 - c) Associate members
 - d) Retired associate members
 - e) Affiliate members (*BOD ¶ 344.4, 586.4*)
 - f) Local pastors under full-time and part-time appointment to a pastoral charge (*BOD ¶ 317*)
 - g) Retired local pastors (voice but not vote)
 - h) Other denomination ministers serving UM churches or in ecumenical service
 - i) Wesley Foundation Campus Ministers
- 2) Lay Members
 - a) A professing member from each church
 - b) Each charge served by more than one clergy shall be entitled to as many lay members as there are clergy members. (“Clergy” shall include deacons for whom the local church is their secondary appointment.)

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- c) One additional lay member from churches with 600 or more members with one pastor under Episcopal appointment, the election of the additional lay member being based on the membership of the church as reported in the most recent conference Journal
- d) Diaconal ministers
- e) Conference lay leader
- f) Conference Lay Servant Ministry Registrar
- g) District lay leaders
- h) Conference president of United Methodist Women
- i) Conference president of United Methodist Men
- j) General Conference lay delegates for the quadrennium following their election
- k) Lay persons who are members of General Conference Board and Agencies and the lay representative to the Jurisdictional Council on Ministries
- l) Lay members of Conference Elected Leader Administrative and Ministry Teams
- m) Wesley Foundation Campus Ministry student
- n) Lay director staff, conference treasurer, and conference secretary, if they are members of a United Methodist church
- o) Deaconesses and Home Missionaries serving within our conference
- p) One young person between the ages of 12-17 and one young person between the ages of 18-30 from each district to be selected by the district
- q) Additional lay persons, divided equally among the districts and selected by each district so as to balance the total number of clergy members

b. Ecumenical Representatives

(See *BOD* ¶ 602.9) The Bishop shall invite an ecumenical representative to participate in the Service of Life and Ministry (Ordination) Service.

c. Plenary Session Guidelines

- 1) **Pre-Conference Reports and Recommendations:** There shall be pre-conference materials containing reports and recommendations to the annual conference session, to be edited and produced by the conference secretary and to be distributed as economically as possible to members of the annual conference at least 30 days prior to opening of the session. The Annual Conference Sessions Planning Team will provide an opportunity to opt in to pay for a hard copy. Materials intended for publication in the pre-conference materials shall be sent to the conference secretary at least 75 days prior to the opening of the session.
- 2) **Late Materials:**
 - a) Legislative items received after the deadline shall not be brought to the annual conference for inclusion unless the subject matter has urgency due to events that have occurred after the deadline for submission of materials.
 - b) Persons bringing the late items shall provide 800 paper copies of the proposal which will be distributed to and viewed by the members before a vote of consideration shall occur.
 - c) Late items will be considered and added to the plenary agenda only when a 2/3 majority of those members present and voting affirm this decision.
- 3) **Consent Calendar:** The Annual Conference Sessions Planning Team will review the submitted legislation before the annual conference session for its action. The Annual Conference Sessions Planning Team will prepare a Recommended for Adoption list and/or a Recommended for Rejection list for Annual Conference Action. Items placed on the RAL or RRL by the Annual Conference Sessions Planning Team may be removed by a petition signed by ten members of the annual conference and presented to the conference secretary by the announced deadline. Following the reading of the RAL and/or RRL lists, at least one hour shall lapse before final disposition. These rules shall not be suspended except by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting.
- 4) **Public Statements and Press Releases:** Public statements and press releases regarding the deliberations and conclusions of the annual conference shall be designated as to whether they are:
 - The official position of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

- The result of a straw poll among those delegates present
 - The personal opinion of the executive officer or United Methodist delegate only
 - The position of a particular established or ad hoc group at the annual conference
- 5) **Rules of Procedure Presented at Opening Session:** Rules of procedure, including the setting of the bar of conference, shall be presented by the Conference Secretary and adopted by the conference at its opening session.

d. Election of Lay Members

Lay members of the annual conference shall be elected for the quadrennium by the pastoral charges in accordance with *The Book of Discipline* and the equalization formula adopted by the annual conference.

e. Love Offering

The Mission Promotion Ministry Team shall be the responsible body for administering the Love Offering of the annual conference session. The Mission Promotion Ministry Team in consultation with the Extended Cabinet shall select a recipient for its Love Offering by December 31.

f. The Conference Journal and Policy & Procedure Manual

The conference *Journal* and *Policy and Procedure Manual* shall be published annually.

03. Elected Leadership

a. Conference Structure and Elected Leadership

- 1) The conference structure and elected leadership are noted below.
- 2) Changes in conference structure shall be processed through the Extended Cabinet and Common Table.
- 3) The election of all elected leadership shall be subject to confirmation by the annual conference session, unless otherwise provided by *The Book of Discipline*.

b. Lists of Members and Officers

All people's names used in conference, district or other mailings and lists of officers, including the local church, will be their lawful name and not nickname.

c. Membership and Term Limits

The membership and term limits for each organizational unit shall be consistent with *The Book of Discipline* and all mandated functions will be incorporated into the functions of one of the administrative or ministry teams. As teams are formed, attention shall be given to the gifts, passion and skills of the team members, as well as seeking to have a variety of voices representing the whole conference in all its diversity.

d. Term of Office

The term of office will be set at four years. Persons will be eligible to serve no more than two consecutive terms of service with the exception of the Board of Ordained Ministry where *The Book of Discipline* allows for three consecutive four year terms. Vacancies between sessions will be filled by the conference Elected Leader Team.

e. Administrative Teams

Administrative Teams hold the primary responsibility for the governance functions of the annual conference. Because of the fiduciary responsibility of these teams, its members shall be nominated by the Elected Leader Team, and elected by the annual conference session.

- 1) Board of Ordained Ministry
 - a) Administrative Review
 - b) Committee on Investigation
- 2) Board of Pension and Health Benefits
- 3) Board of Trustees
- 4) Conference Elected Leader Team
- 5) Council on Finance and Administration
- 6) Episcopacy Committee

f. Ministry Teams

Ministry teams are formed to implement specific initiatives to fulfill the work of the annual conference to equip congregations in the making of disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The chair of the team along with the assigned staff person invite persons to serve on these teams. The current list of Ministry Teams and its composition shall be presented to annual conference session annually for their information and affirmation.

- 1) Annual Conference Sessions Planning Team
- 2) Church and Society
- 3) Commission on Archives and History
- 4) Commission on Religion and Race
- 5) Commission on the Status and Role of Women
- 6) Dakotas and Minnesota Area Camp and Retreat Council
- 7) Dakotas and Minnesota Area Church Multiplication Team
- 8) Higher Education
- 9) Investing in Congregations Granting Team
- 10) Journey Toward Vitality Lead Team
- 11) Lay Ministry Team
- 12) Mission Promotion Team
- 13) Youth Ministry Team

g. Project Teams

Project Teams are either a working group for a specific task and are under the supervision of an administrative team or a group of people who have coalesced around a specific missional focus. Project teams are not considered “elected leaders” of the annual conference although the teams and their membership will be listed in the journal for informational purposes.

h. A Common Table

The chairs of the Administrative and Ministry Teams along with the Director-level staff will gather as a Common Table two times a year for the purposes of 1) alignment and coordination of ministry to the vision and mission and 2) leadership development. This will include discussing yearly direction and goals, evaluating outcomes and stewarding faithfully the resources of the annual conference by engaging in the budgeting process. The Director of Ministries and Lay Leader(s) shall set the agenda and convene the Common Table.

i. Administrative Policies for Ministry Units

- 1) Meals for members attending meetings called by ministry units will be paid for from the common pool for ministry teams to meet and/or common pool for training. Actual meal expense will be paid, but the total amount shall not exceed \$7 per meal or \$12 per day to help defray costs only. Actual lodging expense will also be paid, providing the amount does not exceed sixty percent of the IRS guidelines for that city (\$84 in 2017 for the Twin Cities), and further providing that the individual(s) will need to leave home before 6 a.m. to attend a meeting. Receipts shall be required for all reimbursements except mileage.
- 2) Travel allowance for lay and clergy attending meetings called by ministry units is to help defray expenses at a rate that shall be recommended annually by the Council on Finance and Administration. Payments shall be made by voucher.
- 3) Upon request, financial remuneration may be made by ministry units to its members for dependent care (child and elderly) as a legitimate meeting expense.
- 4) Each conference structure shall designate one person to serve as budget coordinator. Before the conference treasurer will make any payment, it shall be the duty of the budget coordinator to approve and review all vouchers for completeness and appropriateness. The conference treasurer will prepare monthly finance reports. Reimbursements for expenses from the previous year are due at the Finance Office the Friday following the 3rd Monday in January.
- 5) The representatives from the Commission on the Status and Role of Women and the Commission on Religion and Race are authorized to attend any meetings of the administrative and ministry

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teams as they deem necessary to fulfill their role in reviewing and evaluating the priorities of the annual conference for racial, ethnic, and gender inclusiveness. Teams are also encouraged to invite representatives from Commission on the Status and Role of Women and Commission on Religion and Race to attend meetings to foster positive communication and practice regarding racial, ethnic and gender inclusiveness.

- 6) Announcements and agendas of all meetings of elected committees shall be published in advance, when possible and appropriate, on the conference website. Minutes will be posted on the conference website after they are approved by the group and may include supplemental information, as appropriate. When legal, regulatory, supervisory, employment, pension or benefit issues of a sensitive nature are to be discussed, the published announcements, agendas, and minutes should reflect the group entering into executive session. The Board of Ordained Ministry; the Board of Pension and Health Benefits; and the Council on Finance and Administration, when considering personnel issues, are the only elected groups exempt from this requirement.

04. Board of Ordained Ministry

- 1) The Board of Ordained Ministry shall be composed of 42 members placed in two or three classes of four-year terms, nominated by the presiding bishop after consultation with the chairperson, executive committee, and Cabinet.
- 2) The 42 members shall be so divided:
 - 24 from the order of elders, including the chair of the order and a cabinet representative
 - 8 from the order of deacons, one of whom shall be the chair of the order of deacons (One elder or one deacon may be retired. One elder or deacon shall be from an Extension Ministry.)
 - Up to two local pastors or Associate Members who have completed the Course of Study
 - 8 laypersons (can include one or more diaconal ministers)
 - Attention shall be given to the representation of women and ethnic persons
- 3) The board shall have the following structure:
 - The board shall elect a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, secretary, registrar(s), and budget coordinator.
 - Executive Committee composed of the officers, chair of the order of elders, chair of the order of deacons, and conference related persons (elders and deacons)
 - Committees as needed
 - Interview teams as needed

05. Council on Finance and Administration

a. Operations Policies

- 1) The conference treasurer and the chair of the Council on Finance and Administration, the Director of Ministries, and an additional director may, any or all of them, be authorized by the Council on Finance and Administration to sign conference checks.
- 2) The blanket bond shall be maintained whereby the conference treasurer and other persons authorized to sign checks and handle money are covered by office and not by name.
- 3) The conference treasurer shall have custody of and disburse all conference funds and also the funds of all ministry units that are not separately incorporated. District funds not kept by the conference treasurer shall have an annual report published by the district with a copy to the conference treasurer.
- 4) At the end of every fiscal year, balances of all budgeted funds shall revert to the respective conference treasury reserves. Exceptions to this rule may be made on request to the Council on Finance and Administration if the funds have in fact been designated for specific purposes.
- 5) The conference treasurer shall perform the duties of treasurer as outlined in *The Book of Discipline*, the minutes of the annual conference, and the directives of the Council on Finance and Administration. The conference treasurer may, with the approval of the Council on Finance and Administration, assume other responsibilities as may be requested or determined.

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- 6) All employees of the conference, including district superintendents, will be compensated for all ordinary and necessary conference business expenses, including air and rail fare or automobile travel at rates determined by the Council on Finance and Administration and approved by the annual conference, and lodging while away from home.
- 7) The conference treasurer is authorized to borrow up to \$250,000 for conference operations. Any borrowing shall be repaid within the next fiscal year.
- 8) The total amount of the conference apportioned budget may be increased annually by no more than 3% over the current year's approved apportioned budget.
- 9) As required by *The Book of Discipline*, all ministry units, agencies, colleges, or hospitals requesting authorization for a conference-wide appeal for funds from local churches must receive approval from the annual conference. These requests are to be reviewed annually by the Council on Finance and Administration and submitted to the annual conference.

b. Developing the Conference Budget

The procedure for developing the conference budget to be presented to the annual conference shall be as follows:

- 1) All proposals with financial implication to be brought before the annual conference for adoption shall contain the total conference financial consideration with verification by the Council on Finance and Administration.
- 2) Budget requests from ministry units shall be submitted on forms provided by the Director of Finance and Administration.
- 3) The Council on Finance and Administration or a committee designated by them shall conduct budget hearings.
- 4) The Ministry Teams will develop a budget according to program priorities and report the budget requests to the Council on Finance and Administration.
- 5) The Council on Finance and Administration shall receive the budget requests and prepare the total budget for presentation and recommendation to the annual conference. (*BOD* ¶ 613)
- 6) In the event that Council on Finance and Administration determines a budget total that is below the maximum allowed by formula, the budget total may be subject to review by a "ceiling review committee," at the request of a conference structure or by action of the annual conference. This committee shall be named by the Bishop and shall be composed of the Director of Ministries, the conference treasurer, and one representative each from: Board of Pension and Health Benefits, Board of Trustees, conference Lay Leader(s), Cabinet, Council on Finance and Administration, and an at large ministry team chair. At least three of the latter seven shall be laypersons. The representative of the Council on Finance and Administration shall serve as convener. The "ceiling review committee" shall report its action to the annual conference session at the time of the initial presentation of the budget.
- 7) The report of the Council on Finance and Administration to the annual conference of the budget shall be received without motion for adoption until the entire budget proposal has been heard, including modifications that may be made by the Conference itself. Action on the total budget shall be taken after all amendments and budget proposals are considered. Requests for additional funds not included in the budget presented by the Council on Finance and Administration or changes within the budget shall be referred to the Council on Finance and Administration. The Council on Finance and Administration shall consult with the leaders of the ministry teams as to whether equitable adjustment can be made within the budgetary limitations and shall report to the conference for its action(s).
- 8) If the annual conference wishes to raise the budget maximum, the rule must be suspended by a 2/3-majority vote; specific items amending the proposed budget upward should then be submitted and voted upon one by one. When the total budget is before the conference, action shall be taken upon it.
- 9) The district superintendents' salaries shall be determined annually based upon 160% of the Conference Average Compensation minus the built-in housing allowance based on the figures

supplied by the General Board of Pensions for that budget year. Actual utilities and/or a housing allowance shall be paid as determined by the Council on Finance and Administration.

c. Reserve Funds

To assist the conference in its operations, there are three reserve funds.

- 1) A General Operations Reserve Fund shall be established in support of normal conference activities. The primary purpose is to provide the working capital for daily operations, allow responsible budgeting by providing an interim allocations source, plus be a source of funds for unexpected exposures or opportunities arising between sessions. This fund shall have a minimum balance equal to 20% of the budgeted expenditures less any amounts where the premise is the amount received is the amount paid out. This percentage is applied to the reserve level at the beginning of the year compared to the expense level for that year. Where the amount is lower than the desired level, an amount equal to the difference up to 10% of the required reserve level is to be placed into the next year's budget to be apportioned. (It will not be included in the expense level for the next year in calculating the next year's relation to the 20%.) Any excess in reserves will be used to assure the required levels for all RESERVE funds and in consideration of any projected needs that would reduce these funds below their identified bases. Interest earned on this fund will be used to support the General Operations, Legal and Capital Equipment and Improvement Fund in maintaining their minimum balances. Any additional available amount will be used to increase all three fund balances.
- 2) A Legal Reserve Fund of \$200,000 will provide a financial protection buffer to absorb significant and unexpected legal costs of the conference. This fund may be used at the direction of the bishop, dean of the Cabinet and Director of Ministries. Should any amount be used and the fund balance falls below the described level and if the shortfall cannot be recovered from operational reserves or other sources at the end of that year, the amount of shortfall shall be placed into the next budgeting process. Interest earned on this fund will be used to support the General Operations, Legal and Capital Equipment and Improvement Fund in maintaining their minimum balances. Any additional available amount will be used to increase all three fund balances.
- 3) A Capital Equipment and Improvement Fund of \$50,000 may be used for purchase of equipment or remodeling expense in support of conference operations. This disbursement would be in excess of any budgeted amount.

When funds are disbursed, replacement necessary to restore the fund to the \$50,000 level shall be from any excess general reserves at year-end, by budgeting the amount necessary in the next budget cycle or by funding the depreciation on the capital asset over a reasonable time period. Interest earned on this fund will be used to support the General Operations, Legal and Capital Equipment and Improvement Fund in maintaining their minimum balances. Any additional available amount will be used to increase all three fund balances. A team comprised of a Cabinet member, two trustees, two representatives from the Council of Finance and Administration, the conference lay leader, the Director of Administration and Finance and chaired by the Director of Ministries shall be responsible for disbursements from the fund.

d. Designation of Conference Advance Specials, Special Askings and Other Askings

- 1) Conference Advance Special – Designation of Advance Special status allows a group to solicit for funds in the annual conference. It means that a ministry has the endorsement of the Minnesota Annual Conference, is compatible with the mission/teachings of The United Methodist Church and that the conference encourages congregations to support these ministries. Conference Advance Special status is recommended by the Mission Promotion Team and approved by the annual conference session.
- 2) Special Askings are institutions, agencies or ministries that have been given the right to send, with the apportionments to each church a suggested amount for the ensuing year. Special askings status is recommended by the Council on Finance & Administration Team upon application by the requesting institution, agency or ministry and approved by the annual conference session.

- 3) Other Askings are institutions, agencies or ministries that have been given permission to solicit funds from local churches once each year. Other askings status is recommended by the Council on Finance & Administration Team upon application by the requesting institution, agency or ministry and approved by the annual conference session.
 - a) In all three categories above, one set of mailing labels for churches will be provided upon request per year without cost. Additional sets are available at a cost of \$10 per set. At no time will labels or names of individuals in the conference database be provided. All other costs associated with soliciting the churches shall be borne by the institution, agency or ministry undertaking the solicitation.
- 4) Provisional Advance Special status (second mile giving approval) may be granted to new ministries between annual conference sessions upon the recommendation of the Mission Promotion Team.

06. Board of Pension and Health Benefits

a. Administration

- 1) The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits (CBOPHB) shall be governed by *BOD* ¶ 639 and ¶ 1506-1509.
- 2) It is recommended that there be not less than twelve members on the CBOPHB, one-third clergy (one of whom shall also be a member of the Board of Ordained Ministry), one-third laywomen, and one-third laymen.
- 3) The plan for pension program in the Minnesota Annual Conference shall be presented annually by the CBOPHB.

b. Pension Contributions

Pension contributions will be paid by the salary-paying unit as follows:

- 1) Modified direct billing paid to the Minnesota Annual Conference for the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP): An appointed clergy's plan compensation (also known as pension compensation on the Clergy Compensation form 5) is the sum of cash salary received from the church related sources, housing allowance (or when a parsonage is provided, 25% of the cash salary), and any tax-deferred annuity contributions paid by the salary paying unit during the year.
- 2) The contribution base is calculated using the appointed clergy's pension plan compensation for the year, and the appointment increment.
- 3) The church (salary paying unit) pays the amount billed for the CRSP by the Conference Benefits Office.
- 4) Direct billing paid from the salary-paying unit to Wespath – Benefits Investments (formerly known as the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits) for the United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP): The amount by salary reduction agreement that is submitted by the pastor is the pastor's personal contribution, either on a before tax or after tax basis.

c. Long Term Disability and Death Benefit

- 1) The Death Benefit Program, as of January 1, 1982, will be provided by the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP).
- 2) Modified direct billing paid to the Minnesota Annual Conference for the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP): Prior to January 1, 2017: The church billing rate shall be 3% of the pension compensation for each fulltime participant. Beginning January 1, 2017, the church billing rate will be 1% of the pension compensation for each $\frac{3}{4}$ and fulltime participant. The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits will fund 2% of the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) from pension reserves starting January 2017 and will review the funding continuation beyond 2020.
- 3) Effective January 1, 2017, Full and Provisional Members (Elders and Deacons), Associate Members, and Clergy of Other Methodist Denominations appointed in the Minnesota Conference at $\frac{1}{2}$ time will have death and disability coverage through UMLifeOptions, a fully insured UNUM Plan via Wespath.

d. Hospitalization/Health Plan

There shall be a Group Hospitalization and Health Plan in the annual conference.

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- 1) The CBOPHB shall present, annually, a summary of benefits and annual premiums to the annual conference.
- 2) The premium cost to local churches, and the clergy share of the premium, shall be determined by the CPOPHB.
- 3) The premium cost to ministerial members receiving disability benefits shall be subsidized by an amount determined by the CBOPHB and be approved and paid by the annual conference.
- 4) The premium cost to retired pastors shall be subsidized by an amount determined by the CBOPHB and be approved and paid by the annual conference

200. CLERGY

01. Requirements and Admission into Ordained Ministry

- 1) An ordained minister seeking admission into full membership on credentials from another denomination shall be a provisional member for at least two years.
- 2) Relationships and Qualifications: The Board of Ordained Ministry appointee to the District Committee of Ordained Ministry may be the secretary of the district committee. The appointee shall submit a copy of all district, conference and/or district committee actions to the resident bishop, the conference board registrar for candidacy, and to the district superintendent.

02. Clergy Appointment Guidelines

a. Appointment Increment Guidelines

It is the assumption that all appointments are full time. In the event that they are not, then appointments are made in $\frac{1}{4}$ increments.

In any appointment, given the multiple demands of ministry and because it is not a 9-5 job, it is important that clear, shared expectations are formed between the pastoral leader and the Leadership Team creating a job description/covenant that specifies roles, responsibilities and outcomes. The pastoral leader needs to hold responsibility for the management of their time in order to accomplish the tasks/outcomes and be accountable to the appropriate personnel team in how they are structuring their time and investing their energy.

- Full time work for clergy is generally considered to be 45-50 hours a week. Clergy are encouraged and expected to take a day off during the week (often Mondays or Fridays) to compensate for Sundays and to build a schedule that works for their season of life that takes into account evening and weekend work so that they are not working all the time.
- When less than full time, the District Superintendent will create an agreement at the onset of the appointment with the pastor and SPRC about the time increment, the key functions that will be cared for, and how the pastor's hours will be structured for this appointment so there are realistic expectations given the less than full time compensation.
- One practice is using "The Rule of Thirds" which is dividing each day into three segments (morning, afternoon and evening) of about 4 hours each, and then monitoring the segments worked to ensure a healthy work/life balance.
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ time: Sunday plus two segments
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ time: Sunday plus 4 segments
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ time: Sunday plus 7 segments
 - Full time: Sunday plus 9 segments

b. Pastoral Service

Pastoral service on a field is a responsibility of the pastor in charge, and requests for such service from others than the pastor in charge breaks loyalties, hinders the work of the Kingdom, and embarrasses pastors. In order that this may be prevented the following shall be the policy of the Minnesota Annual Conference:

- 1) No pastor shall perform pastoral acts in any parish other than the one assigned, except by the invitation of the pastor in charge, or in cases of emergency with the consent of the district superintendent.
- 2) Lay persons shall refrain from requesting pastoral service from a former pastor, a pastor from another parish, or a retired pastor, thus embarrassing both the pastor in charge and the pastor asked for such a service.

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- 3) We recommend that retired pastors shall refrain from making their homes within the charge that they had been serving immediately prior to retirement.
- 4) Clergy who are retired or on leave shall refrain from participating in the church they most recently exited for a minimum of one year, and any future relationship, must be at the invitation of the current pastor.

03. Clergy Compensation

Compensation for clergy is set by the District Superintendent and Staff Parish Relations Committee at the time of the appointment, and approved by the charge conference annually. Compensation includes base cash salary and housing (allowance or parsonage). Health insurance, pension and disability benefits are offered based on eligibility. Professional expenses including mileage, continuing education and cell phone use are reimbursed through an agreed upon accountable reimbursement plan and budget. See Local Church Section 300.03 for a complete description of Clergy Compensation.

04. Medical/Incapacity Leave

Incapacitation means that a clergyperson under appointment to a local church or charge is judged by the District Superintendent and the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee to be unable to perform the duties of the appointment because of illness, surgery, or accident. The period for medical/ incapacitation leave shall be no longer than 26 weeks or until it is determined that the clergy person applies for disability benefits through the Comprehensive Protection Plan or UMLifeOptions.

There shall be a Medical / Incapacitation Leave Compensation Program in the Minnesota Annual Conference.

- 1) Medical leave compensation means financial assistance provided by the Minnesota Annual Conference through its Board of Pension and Health Benefits (CBOPHB) to a church or other funding entity (charge, district or annual conference) within the conference connectional structures when an appointed clergyperson, because of impaired health (illness, surgery or accident), is judged by the Cabinet to be temporarily unable to perform the essential duties of the appointment.
- 2) Incapacitation leave compensation means financial assistance provided by the Minnesota Annual Conference through its Board of Pension and Health Benefits (CBOPHB) to a church or other funding entity (charge, district or annual conference) within the conference connectional structures when an appointed clergyperson, because of extended impaired health (illness, surgery or accident) beyond the medical leave compensation program, and documented by the physician stating the clergy is unable to perform the essential duties of the appointment in writing to the District Superintendent.
- 3) Incapacitation leave with application of disability benefits from the Comprehensive Protection Plan. In accordance with *BOD* ¶ 356.1, "When a clergy member is granted incapacity leave by the annual conference, if the medical evidence has not yet met the standards for receipt of benefits as set forth in the Comprehensive Protection Plan, section 5.04, the Conference Board of Pensions may authorize payment of benefits in the amount that would otherwise be payable from the Comprehensive Protection Plan." When a clergy member applies for disability benefits from the Comprehensive Protection Plan and the Conference Board of Pensions authorizes payment of benefits, known as a conference grant, the medical/incapacitation leave compensation program will end and the clergy member's appointment will be to incapacitation leave. Financial responsibility for medical premiums changes to the eligibility/subsidy policy for clergy appointed to incapacitation leave receiving benefits from the Minnesota Conference or from the Comprehensive Protection Plan.
- 4) When a clergy member identified for a change of appointment is on medical/incapacitation leave or with the intention of applying for disability with benefits from the Comprehensive Protection Plan, the clergy's local church appointment will end when the local church appointment receives a newly appointed clergy. The clergy will apply for benefits with conference grant in the amount that otherwise would be payable from the Comprehensive Protection Plan while the application is under review. If approved the Comprehensive Protection Plan will be responsible for benefits, if not approved for Comprehensive Protection Plan benefits, the conference grant will end with a maximum of 26 weeks of medical/ incapacitation compensation.

- 5) Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits compensation for a medical leave or incapacitated clergyperson shall be provided with the following stipulations.
 - a) Throughout any period of medical/incapacitation leave the entity funding the position shall always provide housing and utilities for the clergyperson until the appointment is changed.
 - b) Through the first 8 weeks of incapacitation the funding entity shall, in addition to housing and utilities, continue to provide full support (i.e. salary at the current level, health insurance, Clergy Retirement Security Program - CRSP, and Comprehensive Protection Plan – CPP or UMLifeOptions). For this 8 week period, however, the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits, when requested by the Cabinet, may provide funds for pulpit supply or other services essential to the position. The Cabinet's request shall include a brief description of the need for financial assistance as well as identifying the effective date of the clergyperson's incapacitation status.
 - c) Following the first 8 weeks of incapacitation, the funding entity shall continue to provide housing and utilities for the pastor, but the CBOPHB, when requested by the Cabinet, may fund the incapacitated clergyperson's CRSP, Comprehensive Protection Plan, church share of health insurance premium, and salary support at the applicable equitable compensation level (not the clergyperson's current salary level). Funds for pulpit supply or other services integral to the position are no longer provided unless the incapacitated clergyperson's compensation assistance is only partial and the Cabinet regards funding of pulpit supply or other services provided by the particular funding entity to be essential for the missional needs of the Minnesota Annual Conference.
- 6) Should there be a Recurrence of Incapacitation within the same funding entity, the following shall apply:
 - a) No local church, charge, district or annual conference funding entity shall be required to provide more than 8 weeks of full support for incapacitation within any five-year period. Accordingly, whenever a clergyperson is placed on incapacitation and the funding entity, because of a previous incapacitation, fulfills its five-year obligation of full support for 8 weeks prior to completion of full support for the first 8 weeks with the current incapacitation, the CBOPHB will at that point offer the financial assistance which ordinarily begins only after the first 8 weeks of incapacitation. In this circumstance, until the first 8 weeks of incapacitation are completed, the CBOPHB will compensate salary at the current level; after the first 8 weeks, the salary component reverts to the applicable equitable compensation level.
 - b) In the case of recurrence, funds ordinarily provided for pulpit supply or other essential services are reduced in proportion to the funds which the CBOPHB provided in the first 8 weeks for the incapacitated clergyperson's compensation.
- 7) The period for medical / incapacitation leave compensation shall be no longer than 26 weeks:
 - a) Medical / incapacitation shall be considered a continuation if recurrence takes place within 13 weeks of resumption of essential duties and results from, or is contributed to, by the same or related causes as those of the previous medical/ incapacitation.
 - b) The status of a clergyperson on medical/ incapacitation compensation shall be reported monthly by the Cabinet to the CBOPHB.

In any situation, the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits will pay no more than 26 weeks of medical/incapacitation/or conference grant compensation for a clergy member in a five-year period without written request by the Cabinet on the special circumstances and must be approved by the Comprehensive Protection Plan.

05. Leave Benefits

- 1) Adoptive Aid: The Conference Board of Pension/Health Benefits will provide an adoptive aid payment of \$1000.00 to active clergy, with coverage under our current medical plan, for the adoption of a child, other than a blood relative or lawful/legal child of either spouse. Blood relatives are to be defined as nephews, nieces, grandchildren, cousins, or child of a previous marriage of either spouse. A request for payment must be made to the Conference Board of Pension/ Health Benefits within 12 months from the date of adoption. This payment is in lieu of a maternity benefit,

which would have been provided under the medical plan. The Board of Ordained Ministry and the Cabinet should be reminded annually that this benefit is available to clergy. The Conference Board of Pensions will be responsible for this communication.

- 2) Maternity/Paternity Leave: There shall be a Maternity/Paternity Leave Program in the Minnesota Annual Conference:
 - a) In accordance with *The Book of Discipline* a pastor may take up to 13 weeks of maternity/paternity leave at birth or arrival of a child into the home for purposes of adoption. Compensation to the pastor, pension and medical coverage will be maintained by the church for no less than the first 8 weeks.
 - b) Pulpit supply will be arranged by the church prior to the leave and funds will be provided by the Conference Board of Pension and health Benefits when notified of the need for pulpit supply funding during such leave. Pulpit supply funds will be provided for no less than the first 8 weeks of leave, and for such additional period, up to 13 weeks as the church continues clergy salary.
- 3) Sick leave and vacation benefits are listed and described in the Local Church section: 300.03.d

06. Moving

a. Procedures and Policies

- 1) The Minnesota Annual Conference shall be responsible for moving the households of clergy under appointment within the boundary of the Minnesota Annual Conference, subject to the following stated limitations. The Minnesota Annual Conference shall be billed directly, with any charges over the stated limitations to be reimbursed by the clergy, who shall pay this overage amount to the Minnesota Annual Conference within 30 days of the Conference billing. For overages exceeding \$500.00, a monthly payment plan can be established so as to not produce a financial hardship.
- 2) This moving policy and its limitations shall apply to clergy coming directly from seminary, local pastors, provisional members, full elders and deacons, and clergy from another denomination appointed to a local congregation with the Minnesota Annual Conference and lay persons assigned by a District Superintendent to a charge. (Should storage be required due to the variance of graduation and the moving date, contact should be made with the District Superintendent or the Director of Moving.)
- 3) The Minnesota Annual Conference shall provide insurance coverage for clergy household goods while they are being moved. This coverage will be \$1.25 per pound. (Example: 10,000 lb. load will have \$12,500 worth of coverage.) Additional insurance will be made available from the mover.
- 4) The Minnesota Annual Conference shall, on the recommendation of the Moving Team, employ one moving company, associated with a nation-wide carrier, to schedule and move clergy household goods, in consultation with the Director of Moving and the Cabinet. (The mover is Metcalf-Mayflower Moving and Storage Co., Inc.)
- 5) In compliance with IRS rules, the Minnesota Annual Conference will issue a 1099 Miscellaneous Income form to all retiring clergy and those moving to a new appointment that is less than 50 miles from the previous appointment (the IRS considers these commuter moves and not necessary). To help offset the tax liability, a grant may be available. Contact the Director of Moving for details.

b. Limitations

- 1) Maximum Weight: 14,000 pounds. Clergy Couples: 16,500 pounds.)
- 2) Limit for packing material, packing, and wardrobe service is \$300. (Clergy Couples: \$400) Materials can be secured through the conference mover at significant savings or through reimbursements with receipts.
- 3) Maximum for moves within the Greater Twin City (7 county) area shall be 13 hours of tariff. (3 persons and a van) because an hourly rate is charged for metro moves. Should extra stops for pickup and delivery be necessary, the annual conference is limited to 1 and 1/2 hours of tariff in addition to the 13 hours.
- 4) For retiring and/or retired clergy and spouses, or surviving spouses of clergy who have died while in active pastoral service, the annual conference shall pay the moving expense for one move only. The maximum claim allowed for such moves shall be \$3,200.00 (moving and packing supplies). The

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- annual conference shall not be responsible for any expenses incurred over the \$3,200 maximum. This benefit will be available for up to five years from the date of retirement.
- 5) Payment for one extra pickup and delivery will be allowed in those situations where the clergy's study/office is not located in the pastor's residence.
 - 6) Payment by the annual conference shall not cover storage, servicing appliances, warehousing, handling in and out of warehouses, or storage insurance for any move.
 - 7) Payment by the annual conference shall not cover lodging, dining, and gasoline expenses incurred for those using the Conference Mover or another national mover. For those moving themselves, special consideration may be given in consultation with the Director of Moving.
 - 8) Items to be moved must be free from pests, such as fire ants and fungus. The annual conference and its designated moving company shall not be held responsible for refusing to move any items containing or infested with insects or other pests.
 - 9) When clergy in effective relation is appointed to a one-year sabbatical leave, there will be a maximum of \$2,500 allowed for moving and/or storage of household goods. Of this amount, up to \$700 will be paid at the time of the move, and the balance will be payable upon return to the Minnesota Annual Conference for appointment to a local church or conference staff position, upon submission of authorized bills.
 - 10) Intra parish moves (i.e. moving to a different parsonage while still serving the same appointment) are not to be covered by conference funds, and such disbursements of funds will not be approved by the director of moving.
 - 11) Adjustments in the Moving Policy of the Minnesota Annual Conference and moving expenses may be made upon recommendation of the Cabinet and/or the Moving Team to the Director of Moving.

c. Grant for Partial Reimbursement of Tax Liability for Moves of Less than 50 Miles

In order to help offset the tax liability of moving costs when a move is less than 50 miles, the Moving Director will notify those who qualify for applying for such a grant. Grants will be determined by tax liability incurred and the number of completed applications. In no case will a grant be more than \$500.

07. Clergy Housing

The historic parsonage system is the basic housing policy. In recognition of changing circumstances which may indicate that the basic policy of a church-provided parsonage may not be desirable in every situation, provision for exceptions may be made.

All pastors as defined by *BOD* ¶ 339 serving half time or more in local churches, all conference staff members who are clergy and district superintendents shall be provided housing. Housing of clergy is for the convenience of the local church or the annual conference and may be in the form of a parsonage or a housing allowance, whichever best enables the various ministries and the itinerant ministry of the annual conference.

- 1) The guidelines for providing a housing allowance are as follows:
 - a) Housing for clergy and pastors: the housing allowance is established at the time of the appointment, and is set by the District Superintendent in consultation with the SPRC and pastor. The housing allowance is determined by the fair market value (rent or purchase) of a median priced 3-4 bedroom home in the community including the cost of utilities. A clergy can choose to set aside more of their compensation towards housing in alignment with IRS regulations if he or she choose housing to meet their desires and needs that exceed the amount provided by the housing allowance.
 - b) Housing for district superintendents: at the time of an appointment of a new superintendent, the bishop, in consultation with the new superintendent and the district superintendency committee will make a determination of the needs of the district and the superintendent and will inform the Board of Trustees if a parsonage is required or if the district superintendent will receive a housing allowance. Housing allowances for district superintendents will be set by the Council on Finance and Administration.
 - c) Housing for conference staff: clergy under appointment to the conference staff are eligible to set aside a portion of their compensation as housing allowance. The Council of Finance and Administration will approve such housing allowance designations annually.

- d) Housing for new-church-start pastors: Negotiations to establish a housing allowance for a new-church-start pastor will include the new-church-start pastor, the Director New Church Development, and the district superintendent. Final arrangements must be mutually agreed to by these parties.
- 2) It is recommended that a housing allowance be based on the rental value of the current parsonage or, if the church/charge does not own a parsonage, on the rental value of a three to four bedroom home in the parish setting that substantially meets conference parsonage standards and IRS regulations. In addition to the housing allowance, an agreed upon allowance or the actual cost for utilities should be paid. The down payment and closing costs on a house and all other costs of purchase and maintenance are the responsibility of the pastor and shall not be loaned or given to the pastor by the local church or by the congregation's members.
- 3) Once initiated, a housing allowance is expected to continue for the duration of a pastoral appointment. The allowance shall be subject to annual approval of the charge conference. The charge conference shall not have the authority to reduce the housing allowance without negotiation and consent of the pastor, the SPRC, and the district superintendent.
- 4) The local church/charge shall allow the pastor who receives a housing allowance to live where he/she chooses in the community served. If the pastor needs or chooses to live outside the communities served, this must be agreed upon with the SPRC and the district superintendent.
- 5) The housing allowance may be used for purchase, rent, or lease as desired by the pastor.
- 6) The incoming pastor shall have no obligation to purchase the home of his/her predecessor.
- 7) If a pastor refuses to live in a local church-provided parsonage that meets annual conference parsonage standards, then the local church is not required to provide a housing allowance.
- 8) Clergy couple housing compensation: Each person of a clergy couple is entitled to housing.
- 9) When a clergy couple serves two or more separate congregations and there are two or more parsonages and they only need one to live in, conversations with the District Superintendent, the SPRC(s), and the clergy couple will determine housing arrangements and which parsonage will be used. The church(es) owning the parsonage(s) that is/are not used will not be required to provide a housing allowance. The churches involved in this arrangement are responsible to negotiate reasonable sharing of expenses of housing such as utilities and home maintenance expenses for the clergy couple's residence in the other church's parsonage.
- 10) Recognizing that *BOD* ¶ 331.10b does not list housing as part of the compensation package of a deacon, it is strongly recommended that the SPRC and the District Superintendent consider costs relating to housing for deacons, whose primary appointment is the local church, appointed to local churches as the compensation package is developed and set.
- 11) Other clergy housing policies are listed and described in the Local Church section: 300.04

08. Rental/Housing Allowance for Retired/Disabled Clergy

WHEREAS, the religious denomination known as The United Methodist Church (the "Church"), of which this Conference is a part, has in the past functioned and continues to function through ministers of the gospel (within the meaning of Internal Revenue Code section 107) who were or are duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers of the Church ("Clergypersons"); and

WHEREAS, the practice of the Church and of this Conference was and is to provide active Clergypersons with a parsonage or a rental/housing allowance as part of their gross compensation; and

WHEREAS, pensions or other amounts paid to active, retired, terminated, and disabled Clergypersons are considered to be deferred compensation and are paid to active, retired, terminated, and disabled Clergypersons in consideration of previous active service; and

WHEREAS, the Internal Revenue Service has recognized the Conference (or its predecessors) as the appropriate organization to designate a housing/rental allowance for Clergypersons who are or were members of this conference and are eligible to receive such deferred compensation;

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NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That an amount equal to 100% of the pension, severance, or disability payments received from plans authorized under *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (BOD)*, which includes all such payment from Wespeth Benefits & Investments (aka General Board of Pension and Health Benefits), during the year of 2017 and 2018 by each active, retired, terminated, or disabled Clergy person who is or was a member of the Conference, or its predecessors, be and hereby is designated as a rental/housing allowance for each such Clergy person; and that the pension, severance, or disability payments to which this rental/housing allowance applies will be any pension, severance, or disability payments from plans, annuities, or funds authorized under the *BOD*, including such payments from Wespeth and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a Wespeth plan, annuity, or fund authorized under the *BOD*, that result from any service a Clergy person rendered to this Conference or that an active, a retired, terminated, or a disabled Clergy person of this Conference rendered to any local church, annual conference of the Church, general agency of the Church, other institution of the Church, former denomination that is now a part of the Church, or any other employer that employed the Clergy person to perform services related to the ministry of the Church, or its predecessors, and that elected to make contributions to, or accrue a benefit under, such a plan, annuity, or fund for such active, retired, terminated, or disabled Clergy person's pension, severance, or disability as part of his or her gross compensation.

Note: The rental/housing allowance that may be excluded from a Clergy person's gross income in any year for federal income tax purposes is limited under Internal Revenue Code section 107(2) and regulations thereunder to the least of: (1) the amount of the rental/housing allowance designated by the Clergy person's employer or other appropriate body of the Church (such as this Conference in the foregoing resolutions) for such year; (2) the amount actually expended by the Clergy person to rent or provide a home in such year; or (3) the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances (such as a garage), plus the cost of utilities in such year.

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01. Apportionments

- 1) The conference treasurer will publish a complete list of all apportionments in the conference Journal. No later than September 1 of each year, the Council on Finance and Administration shall indicate to each church its apportionment for: Clergy Support Fund, *BOD* ¶ 614.1; Administration Fund, *BOD* ¶ 614.2; and World Service and conference Benevolence Fund, *BOD* ¶ 614.3 and ¶ 812.
- 2) Apportionments are a primary responsibility of each local church and take precedence over any special gifts or advance specials.
- 3) Local churches shall make monthly remittances to the conference treasurer.
- 4) The conference treasurer will close the conference financial books by January 10, and churches should have final remittances to his/her office by that date.
- 5) Should there be errors in factors used in calculating apportionments, a letter explaining this should be sent to the district superintendent and the conference treasurer's office prior to January 15 of the year being adjusted.
- 6) Release from unpaid apportionments: Unpaid apportionments remain a responsibility until paid unless released. Beginning in the 2001 annual conference year, all churches who pay their annual conference apportionments in full and have any unpaid prior years' apportionments will receive a 25% release per year.

02. Insurance Coverage

- 1) All churches will carry worker's compensation insurance for all employees, including the pastor(s).
- 2) All churches will make adequate provision for automobile liability insurance covering all cars that may be used for transporting persons or groups in activities under church sponsorship.
- 3) All churches are encouraged to consider the necessity of carrying malpractice insurance.
- 4) All churches will carry adequate fidelity bonds on elected officials responsible for funds in the local church.

03. Clergy Compensation

a. Cash Compensation

- 1) Cash Compensation, the process of setting the pastor's compensation, is a task that many churches find the most difficult part of the budget process.
 - a) The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPR) has one of the most important roles in the process. Recommendations of the S/PPR are presented to the church council. Budget items are reported to the Committee on Finance to be incorporated in the proposed budget for the coming year. The S/PPR's recommendations and the total budget are then considered by the church council.
 - b) The resulting decisions are presented to the charge/church conference for final approval. The chairperson of the charge/church conference will lift the compensation of the pastor(s) out of the budget for individual passage.
 - c) Adequate time must be allowed for this important decision making process. By meeting with the pastor(s) at least four times year a relationship can be built allowing for open communication and frank discussion which will create better understanding. Early in September, four months before the beginning of the fiscal year, is an appropriate time to start considering compensation for the coming year.
 - d) In order to share in the process each pastor and staff member should meet individually with the S/PPR Committee. Try to make this an experience of affirmation. We all function better in an atmosphere of support.
 - e) To consider the appropriate compensation for your pastor(s), you may want to examine support levels of churches of similar size in your area from the reports in the conference Journal. Membership figures will be found in the Statistical Reports and pastor's compensation in the Financial Reports.

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- f) You may also want to make inquiries of compensation of similar size congregations in your community, or consider the income of other professionals of like educational preparations.
- 2) Base Cash Compensation
- a) There shall be a base cash compensation for each charge of the conference to be calculated upon two factors: Minimum cash compensation and increments for seniority of the pastor.
- b) The minimum base compensation for 2018 is defined as the 2017 base compensation of \$36,349 plus the Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) used by the federal government for the year we are in (that is, the Cost Of Living Adjustment announced last October for 2017 SSA, which was 0.3%).
- c) In addition there is a step increase of \$700 for years of service for the first 8 steps. In keeping with our ongoing policy, the first step normally begins on January 1 following 18 months of service in the Minnesota Annual Conference.
- | | |
|------|----------|
| Base | \$36,458 |
| 1 | \$37,158 |
| 2 | \$37,858 |
| 3 | \$38,558 |
| 4 | \$39,258 |
| 5 | \$39,958 |
| 6 | \$40,658 |
| 7 | \$41,358 |
| 8 | \$42,058 |
- d) In considering additional compensation beyond these steps noted above the S/PPR is encouraged to consider the announced Cost Of Living Adjustment and merit increases in their mutual negotiation with the pastor.
- e) Further, this proposal does not intend to reduce current compensation levels recommended by S/PPR and approved by the Church/Charge Conference during the ongoing tenure of a pastoral appointment.
- f) Further, in recognition of the financial realities and to allow for flexibility in the appointment process, exceptions to above equitable compensation policy can be approved by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the Cabinet and the voluntary consent of the pastor involved.
- g) Seniority for clergy from other denominations and communions who have had their orders recognized by the Minnesota Annual Conference shall have their seniority status established by the Cabinet before their first appointment in the Minnesota Annual Conference. The Cabinet is urged to consider years of service in the ministry exercised in other denominations, especially those coming from the churches of the Commission on Pan-Methodist Cooperation and Union and other member churches of the Churches Uniting in Christ (See *BOD* ¶ 625.10).

b. Reimbursable Accounts

- 1) Continuing Education
- a) In addition to the base cash compensation, the charge shall budget an allowance for continuing formation and spiritual growth. The conference minimum is \$800 per year. It is recommended that the amount be equal to 2.5% of the Conference Average Compensation, which for 2017 is \$63,142 or \$1,578.55. (See 1988 Journal, "Program of Continuing Education" under III.B.5, page 234). This amount is to be expended only on a vouchered basis as a reimbursement.
- b) In addition to vacation time, the charge shall provide a period of time for continuing formation and spiritual growth. The conference minimum shall be one week per year. It is recommended that in addition, a one-month period be provided within each quadrennium. (See *BOD* ¶ 351.2).
- 2) Mileage: The pastor shall be reimbursed for vouchered actual mileage driven in parish work at least equal to the Internal Revenue Service approved rate. Fifty cents is the reimbursement rate for a wheel-chair accessible van when necessary.

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- 3) All churches shall pay actual parsonage utilities for church-owned parsonages. (Utilities costs are considered a part of the housing allowance provided when no church-owned parsonage is provided.)
- 4) Professional Expenses:
 - a) Each charge shall establish and budget for an accountable reimbursement plan for pastor's business-related expenses, which meets Internal Revenue Service requirements for such a plan. The conference minimum is \$500.
 - b) It is vital that the SPRC and pastor(s) agree beforehand on the expenses to be reimbursed and then estimate the amount necessary to pay these expenses. At a minimum, the amount should include money to attend annual conference, pay dues to the local Ministerial Association and other civic organizations where the pastor represents the religious community--Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis--as well as sufficient funds to cover participation in retreats, camps, confirmation trips, and other church events where the pastor is expected to attend and/or provide leadership.
 - c) In addition, money may be allocated toward entertainment expenses (pizza for the youth group) or cleaning of robes and vestments, cards and gifts given to parishioners at weddings, confirmations, books and periodicals purchased for the practice of ministry (though, up to 1/4 of a pastor's continuing education allowance may be used for books and periodicals).

It is important to agree ahead of time on what expenses are to be covered and how to handle reimbursement if agreed upon expenses are greater than expected. Doing this will avoid disagreements over reimbursement. Remember, it is vital that the pastor submit a voucher stating the date, cost, and business purpose of the expense before receiving payment. Simply giving 1/12 of the budgeted amount for reimbursement voids the tax advantage. (Doing so makes the reimbursement fully taxable income.)

This is also true of mileage reimbursement and continuing education. They also must be vouchered each month and the pastor paid only for business miles driven or continuing education events attended since the last reimbursement. If mileage, business expenses, or continuing education expenses do not reach the budgeted amount, they may not be distributed as a bonus to the pastor. This action also makes the entire reimbursement for the year taxable.

One other caution--pastors may not reduce their salary for the purposes of creating a larger business expense reimbursement account. This is confusing because pastors may sign voluntary salary reduction agreements for housing appurtenances, tax deferred retirement annuities and cafeteria plans to pay for medical expenses and childcare.

A pastor may negotiate a smaller raise and a larger reimbursement plan so long as the salary still meets the conference minimum salary specifications.

Churches receiving minimum salary support are expected to provide a \$500 Accountable Reimbursement Plan.

- 5) The pastor shall pay the Social Security Self-Employment Tax which is not eligible as a reimbursable account.

c. Compensation Funding Procedures

- 1) Charges unable to meet base cash compensation may be temporarily assisted by receiving a grant from the Strategic Leadership Fund (formerly called the Equitable Compensation Fund). Charges needing more than temporary assistance are encouraged to consult with the Cabinet for alternatives rather than receiving funds from the Strategic Leadership Fund. The District Superintendent is the authorized agent of the Strategic Leadership Fund and grant distribution requires Cabinet approval.
- 2) A single church charge with paid program staff other than the pastor will not be aided.
- 3) Each pastor who is in good standing and who is appointed to full time service shall have a right to receive no less than base cash compensation established by the annual conference for persons in full time service (*BOD* ¶ 342.1), and therefore, with Cabinet approval may receive support from the Strategic Leadership Fund. Clergy may waive their right to minimum compensation for missional reasons.

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- 4) Each pastor who is in good standing and who is appointed by the bishop to less than full time service is eligible for support from the Strategic Leadership Fund in one-quarter increments.
- 5) Student pastors do not have claim upon the conference Strategic Leadership Fund.
- 6) Deacons do not have claim upon the conference Strategic Leadership Fund unless licensed and serving as a local pastor.
- 7) Agreements between district superintendents and Staff/Parish Relations Committees for Equitable Compensation support when a new pastor's compensation level is different than the predecessor's level have priority in the use of Strategic Leadership Funds. Further, these agreements may supersede the policies outlined in subsections 1 through 6 outlined above.
- 8) The procedures for and granting of Strategic Leadership Fund of the annual conference are the responsibility of the Cabinet and are budgeted through the Investing in Congregations line item.
- 9) Every church receiving Strategic Leadership Fund assistance will develop a financial plan for sustainability as Strategic Leadership Fund grants are only given for up to a three-year period.
- 10) Because of our connectional system, each church receiving base compensation assistance shall be up-to-date on apportionments.

d. Benefits

- 1) **Health Insurance:** In addition to the base cash compensation, the charge shall pay that portion of the conference health insurance program for pastors and their families as adopted by the annual conference.
- 2) **Pension Benefits:** In addition to the base cash compensation, the charge shall pay the pastor's monthly pension contribution for Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) and death/disability coverage for the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) or UMLifeOptions. In addition to the base cash compensation, the charge shall send to Wespath the amount by salary reduction agreement that is the personal contribution for UMPIP either on a before tax, ROTH, or after tax basis. The clergy person is responsible for submitting the appropriate documentation to the Benefits Officer or to Wespath and to necessary congregational officers.
- 3) **Sick Leave:** The Minnesota Annual Conference expects that cooperative and constructive conversations will take place between the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee and the pastor in consultation with the District Superintendent when there is negotiation of any issues. When illnesses or unanticipated special circumstances arise for a pastor or pastoral family, the goal is to meet the needs of both the pastor/pastoral family and the congregation. Circumstances of unexpected health concerns often are accompanied by emotion and challenge. Pastors and congregations are encouraged to make extra effort to embody the best of our Christian graces in caring for each other and finding a way through unanticipated situations.
- 4) **Vacation:** Congregations shall grant pastors an annual vacation of at least four weeks with pay including at least four Sundays, and upon completion of ten years of service in the conference, congregations shall grant pastors an annual vacation of at least five weeks with pay, including at least five Sundays. The pastor, in consultation with the Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations, shall provide for services in the church when the pastor is on vacation. Eligible vacation days for one year shall be counted from July 1 to June 30, to correspond with the annual conference appointment process. Exceptions, as in cases of midyear or special appointments, should be negotiated through the district superintendent and the Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations. The pastor shall be given the privilege of dividing his or her vacation into two or more periods of time. These policies shall also apply to district superintendents and other personnel of the Conference. For pastors in their first appointment in the Minnesota Annual Conference, the following graduated schedule shall be considered a minimum and is to be worked out in consultation with the Committee on Pastor Parish Relations of the charge served:
 - First Year: two weeks vacation
 - Second Year: three weeks vacation
 - Third Year: four weeks vacation
 - Tenth Year: five weeks vacation

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Vacations should be scheduled with discretion in relationship to camp and/or conference responsibilities. Any pastor who moves may feel free to take his/her vacation during the first summer on the new charge.

- 5) District and conference Work: Each pastor is encouraged to devote time to work at conference and/or district camp experience or seminar each year. This time is not to be construed as vacation time.
- 6) Maternity/Paternity, Adoptive Aid and Incapacity Leave benefits are listed and described in the Clergy section: 200.05

e. Termination of Pastorate

The Bishop and Cabinet shall annually determine the termination date for the salary and pastoral service of pastors moving to a new charge.

f. Parsonage Penalty Adjustment

This adjustment is designed to offset the pension penalty of pastors who reside in parsonages. This amount will vary from year to year. It is based on 3% of the difference between the average housing allowance and the average parsonage value. For the base on which the pension amount is figured housing is added to the base compensation figure. In the case of a parsonage it is 25% of the cash salary. In the case of a housing allowance it is the actual dollars of the housing allowance. This parsonage penalty adjustment is potentially taxable income to the pastor. In order to have the result be more equity in pension contribution, it is strongly recommended that this amount of money be invested by the pastor in the UMPIP (United Methodist Personal Investment Plan). In retirement the entire amount of pension received from Wespath to the extent it is used to provide housing is non-taxable income per current IRS rules.

g. Yoked Charges

When a charge of the Minnesota conference is yoked with a church of another denomination and served by a pastor who is member of the Minnesota Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, the base compensation shall be determined by the provisions of this conference, but when the charge is served by a pastor of the other denomination the base compensation shall be determined by the provisions of the denomination to which the pastor belongs.

04. Parsonages

- 1) No assets from the sale of a church-owned parsonage shall be used for current operating expenses of the charge (*BOD* ¶ 2543). The Board of Trustees of the local church shall assure that, from the proceeds of a church-owned parsonage being sold, at least 20% of the cost of a home in the area that meets Minnesota Annual Conference parsonage standards, plus an amount to cover closing costs shall be held in escrow. It is recommended that the principal account on the escrow be adjusted annually to provide equity with inflation and the real estate market. Interest received from an escrow account may be used toward the provision of a housing allowance. Any such sale of a church-owned parsonage must include consent of the pastor, district superintendent, district Board of Church Location and Building, and the charge conference, according to the process outlined in the current Discipline.
If the parsonage is not sold, but held for rental purposes, rental income should normally be applied toward a housing allowance for the pastor or for current expenses. Said rental parsonage shall be maintained at the conference and local community rental housing code standards and inspected annually by the local Board of Trustees, in readiness for possible future use as the parsonage. Assets from the sale of a new-church-start parsonage, prior to the constituting church conference, will conform to agreements made at the time of the original purchase of the parsonage.
- 2) If a church needs to purchase a parsonage for an incoming pastor, or if a parsonage is not ready for the new clergy-family residents, appropriate housing accommodation shall be provided for the clergy until the parsonage is ready and any extra moving costs shall be the responsibility of the local church. If a pastor requests a housing allowance, after living in the parsonage, the costs of moving to another home using a housing allowance is the pastor's. If a church requests the move to a housing allowance, the move costs are borne by the church.

- 3) The SPRC in cooperation with the trustees shall provide and properly maintain an adequate and comfortable residence for the pastor (and family). This committee shall use these minimum standards as the standards for parsonages in the Minnesota Conference. The District Board of Church Location and Building is required to approve plans for all major changes in the housing situation. Each committee, at the convenience of the parsonage family, should inspect its parsonage, using the annual parsonage evaluation form as a guide. If anything fails to meet minimum standards, necessary steps should be taken to accomplish the work required. With the concurrence of the parsonage family and with the advice of appropriate district board, when necessary, the committee shall establish a mutually agreeable order of priority and schedule for the completion of the work. Each committee should study the present parsonage with the thought of providing a comfortable and adequate home as well as a sound investment. If the parsonage is not structurally sound, or if too much expense is required to bring it up to minimum standards, steps should be taken to provide another home as the parsonage. All hazards to personal safety shall be immediately corrected. The annual parsonage evaluation shall be included in the annual charge conference reports and a copy provided for the district superintendent's file.

Reference: *BOD* ¶ 2544.3.b.1a, b, c, 2, 4.d.1, 2, 3 as follows:

3. b) After approving a purchase proposal, the charge conference shall be deemed to have authorized and directed the board of trustees to proceed with the purchase. In the case of the purchase of a parsonage, the board of trustees shall either:

(a) purchase a parsonage that has on the ground-floor level:

- (i) (a) one room that can be used as a bedroom by a person with a disability;
- (ii) (b) one fully accessible bathroom; and
- (iii) (c) fully accessible laundry facilities; or

(b) purchase a parsonage without the accessible features for persons with disabilities specified above and remodel it within one year's time, so that it does have those features.

4) Parsonage Minimum Requirements

- a) A safe and dependable hot and cold water system throughout the house including water softening equipment where needed. All of the plumbing shall meet state and local codes.
- b) A central automatic heating system. The heating system shall have sufficient capacity to bring the entire habitable part of the house to a comfortable temperature and meet state and local codes.
- c) The house shall be fully insulated, with storm and screen doors and storm and screened windows as required. (It is recommended insulation be brought to local codes.)
- d) All movable windows shall be in operating condition.
- e) The grounds around the house shall be well drained. In the event that there is flooding in the basement, a sump pump shall be provided.
- f) There shall be provision for adequate television reception (cable/antenna/satellite)
- g) The laundry: automatic heavy-duty, large capacity washer with direct plumbing to the washer, large capacity dryer with either a 220 volt outlet or a gas connection for dryer, a 4-inch vent for the dryer, a deep sink or stationary tub with dedicated hot and cold faucets, and indoor drying space. Decision makers are encouraged to consider energy efficient appliances.
- h) All electrical power outlets and wiring shall conform to state and local codes. (Check with your local building inspector to make sure things conform.)
- i) There shall be adequate shelter (in good condition and conveniently located) for the appointed pastor's car.
- j) All parsonage grounds shall be safe for children.
- k) Appropriate floor coverings and window treatments shall be provided in living and dining room.
- l) The kitchen shall be furnished with good tile, linoleum, or carpet on the floor; and equipped with a good range and oven, sink, adequate refrigerator-freezer, adequate storage cabinets and lighting.
- m) Adequate closet and storage space shall be provided throughout the house.
- n) Each parsonage shall have at least a kitchen, living room, dining area, three bedrooms, bath and a half, and an area for utilities.

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- o) The church office, when located in the parsonage, shall be furnished with bookshelves, desk, chair, locking file cabinets, safe or fireproof file for membership records and other permanent records, private telephone line, a computer with software for word processing and office applications and internet service, and sufficient lighting.
 - p) The parsonage shall be of sound construction with attention and repair being given to cracked walls and sagging floors.
 - q) These same standards shall apply in cases of multiple parsonages, even when rented by the congregation. If an apartment is to be used as a parsonage, it must have the approval of the District Board of Church Location and Building and the District Superintendent.
 - r) Church owned parsonages, residences, shall have an adequate number of smoke/fire detectors, CO detectors, and other appropriate detectors for the area in which the home is located.
 - s) Church owned parsonages shall be tested for radon. Testing shall be done in accordance with the current protocols for radon measurement in homes adopted by the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technicians. If the testing shows that radon is found to be at an unacceptable level, the congregation must take steps to bring the levels into the acceptable range. Because radon levels can and do change, it is recommended that this testing be redone every three years.
 - t) When bedrooms are in the basement, there shall be alternate access, or exit door, other than the stairs to the main level. Split-levels with bedrooms on lower level shall have an alternate exit door, or exit windows, to meet standards of the Minnesota Uniform Building Code. (Check with your local building inspector to make sure things conform.)
 - u) Recommendations: for the care of the parsonage grounds: power lawn mower, ladder, hose, seed, fertilizer; Automatic dishwasher; Eating space should be provided in the kitchen; Consideration should be given to a family-recreation room, and/or additional sleeping area for guests.
 - v) Small dry powder ABC fire extinguishers shall be furnished in the kitchen and near the heating plant.
 - w) Consider improving accessibility for handicapped persons.
 - x) An amount equal to at least 2-1/2 percent of the replacement value of the parsonage shall be annually budgeted for maintenance of the parsonage or placed in a sinking fund to be used for future parsonage maintenance.
- 5) Utilities and Standards
- a) In addition to the base cash compensation, every charge shall pay actual utilities for church-owned parsonages. Utilities include: heat, electricity, water, water softener (including salt) where needed, sewage, garbage disposal, basic TV/internet/phone services for the parsonage.
 - b) The Parsonage Maintenance/Improvement Fund (See 1987 Journal, p. 167): Each charge shall set up an annual parsonage maintenance/improvement fund in a separate checking account from the congregation's general fund account (suggested minimum to begin each year \$1000).
 - c) Parsonage Standards: Parsonages as provided will meet all appropriate state and local building codes. It is expected that the parsonage will be appropriate for the community in which it is located. Any house proposed to be purchased or built as a parsonage shall have the approval of the District Board of Location and Building or, in matters dealing with the purchase or building of conference parsonages, the conference Trustees. (See the following references in *BOD ¶ 2544.3b 1+2 and 2544.4d 1, 2 + 3*).
- 6) Minimum Requirements for New Parsonages (Built or Purchased)
- a) Central heat, preferably zoned, with gas, oil or electrical fuel source.
 - b) Central humidifier (unless closed heating system).
 - c) Basements on lower levels shall be dry and usable.
 - d) Two-car garage.
 - e) Give attention to sound conditions from room to room by offsetting heating and electrical outlets and providing insulation for sound control.

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- f) It is recommended that there shall be at least three bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen with eating area, two bathrooms, an area for utilities, and storage space.
 - g) The living room area shall have at least 235 square feet.
 - h) The dining area shall not be less than 120 square feet.
 - i) A foyer shall be provided which shall be a separate central area, with a coat closet of not less than 5 linear feet.
 - j) The floor plan should provide access from the kitchen area to the sleeping area without going through the living room.
 - k) Overhangs shall be provided over entrances in newly built homes.
 - l) The master bedroom should be at least 180 square feet. The other bedrooms should be no less than 120 square feet. These sizes are exclusive of closets, which should be at least 2 feet deep.
 - m) Each full bath should be no less than 40 square feet.
 - n) The kitchen, including eating area and adequate built-in cupboard space, should be at least 200 square feet and should be equipped with hood or exhaust fan.
 - o) Each exception shall be allowed by a 3/4 vote of the District Board of Location and Building or a 3/4 vote of the Conference Board of Trustees in matters dealing with the purchase or building of conference parsonages.
- 7) Recommendations for New Parsonages (Built or Purchased)
- a) Wall to wall carpet, except kitchen and bath.
 - b) Family room and/or study.
 - c) Tool space and workbench.
 - d) A bedroom and a half bath on ground level.
 - e) Fireplace (see energy statement).
 - f) A patio area (see energy statement).
 - g) Air conditioning (see energy statement).
 - h) Strongly urge consideration of needs of handicapped persons. (e.g. door widths, stairs) The building committee shall provide on the ground-floor level of a newly constructed parsonage: one room that can be used as a bedroom by a person with a disability; one fully accessible bathroom; and fully accessible laundry facilities.
- 8) Recommendations on Energy Conservation and Building Maintenance
- With the growing awareness of the need for energy efficiency in our lifestyle as a key to energy conservation, the following recommendations are urged as factors to be considered in purchase, construction, or remodeling.
- a) New or replacement appliances should be energy efficient.
 - b) Fireplaces, patio doors, air-conditioning installation or use be considered in light of energy consumption/loss/cost factors.
 - c) In new construction or remodeling consider:
 - 6" studs and insulation
 - Insulating sheathing on exterior basement, or lower level, to have rigid insulation to meet energy code requirements. This is mandatory on newly built parsonages.
 - Triple-glazed windows
 - Insulated exterior doors
 - Vestibules at all exterior entrances
 - d) Maintenance is sometimes a problem on building exteriors. Consider installation of maintenance-free exterior siding, soffit, fascia (steel, aluminum, vinyl)
- 9) Parsonage Damages
- a) We remind all parties concerned that houses are built for occupation. Pastors and their families are just like any other families in that they wish to live comfortably in their home. No local church should expect that the parsonage will be treated any differently than any other home. A home is to be lived in, to be used, to be enjoyed as a place of residence, and is to experience normal wear and tear.
 - b) We remind all persons involved that the parsonage is not only the property of the local church, but that it is also the private home for a family while they are the occupants. This means that the

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pastor and their family members are to view the parsonage as personal property, respecting the need for continued maintenance, and that they assume responsibility for damages which are beyond normal wear and tear.

- c) The following facts need to be reported to local churches and pastors:
 - *BOD* ¶ 2533.4 says: "The chairperson of the board of trustees or the chairperson of the parsonage committee, if one exists, the chairperson of the committee on staff-pastor-parish relations, and the pastor shall make an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to ensure proper maintenance."
 - Our Parsonage Standards Policy (Policy & Procedure Manual 300.04(3) states: "Each [Staff-Pastor-Parish Relations] Committee, at the convenience of the parsonage family, should inspect its parsonage, using the annual parsonage evaluation form as a guide. If anything fails to meet minimum standards, necessary steps should be taken to accomplish the work required."
 - Our interpretation of these two statements is that this should be an on-site inspection, with no part of the parsonage as off-limits, except for the personal property of the pastor and family.
 - d) We believe that Christian people can responsibly come to an acceptable agreement that will satisfy all parties involved.
 - e) An on-site inspection of the parsonage shall be made one month before the pastor is to move to a new appointment, involving the chairperson of the Staff-Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, the chairperson of the board of trustees, and the pastor. If extraordinary damage is evident, the pastor shall meet with the chairperson of the Staff-Pastor-Parish Relations Committee and the trustees to assess the amount of damage and to establish responsibility for financing the needed repairs. The district superintendent is to be notified of such a meeting, previous to the meeting, by the chairperson of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. If the issue is not resolved, the Staff-Pastor-Parish Relations Committee chairperson shall again contact the district superintendent asking for intervention.
 - f) If the district superintendent is asked to intervene, s/he shall ask the District Board of Church Location and Building to meet with the responsible parties to resolve the issue. If the pastor is judged to be responsible for the damages by the District Board of Church Location and Building, but still refuses to accept responsibility, the local church shall withhold from the last month's salary, or a part thereof, for payment of damages.
- 10) Other clergy housing policies are listed and described in the Clergy section: 200.04

05. Exceptions to the Ministerial Support and Services Policies

The Board of Ordained Ministry will review these policies annually, and any exceptions will be approved by the cabinet.

06. Charge Business Expense

a. Office Equipment and Supplies

In order that there may be an efficient use of a pastor's time, talents and education, each charge of the Minnesota conference:

- 1) Shall provide for its pastor and associate pastor(s) a study, preferably in the church building, which shall be equipped with a desk and chairs, adequate locking filing space, sufficient book shelves and proper lighting.
- 2) Shall provide safe or fireproof file for membership records and other permanent records. It is recommended that membership records also be saved electronically.
- 3) Shall provide modern office machines and equipment (including phone and computers with internet service), necessary for the efficient conduct of the charge's business, and shall pay office expense, such as postage, stationery, office supplies. The charge shall pay all of the repair and maintenance costs.
- 4) Is strongly urged to provide secretarial help for the parish, with office space separate from pastor's study.
- 5) As cell phones have become a primary tool for communication, we encourage churches to create a cell phone use policy and provide a financial allowance for clergy and staff.

b. Pulpit Supply

The congregation is responsible for the cost of pulpit supply when the pastor is away from the charge for vacation, local church programming, service in conference or district programs, absence required or requested by the annual conference or general boards or agencies, approved sabbatical leaves and continuing education, and sickness or family emergencies.

07. Golden Cross Sunday

Golden Cross Sunday will be observed by the churches of the Minnesota Annual Conference on its traditional date, the first Sunday in May. The Minnesota Annual Conference authorizes a special Golden Cross Offering to be received on that day to be used for the work of authorized health care ministries within our annual conference. An alternate date on which to observe Golden Cross Sunday and to receive the Golden Cross Offering may be determined by individual churches.

400. CONFERENCE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

- 1) **Theological Context:** As members of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, we confess our love for God as the source and giver of all life, as the Holy One with sole authority over life and final power over death. We acknowledge God's self-revelation in acts of mercy and justice in the Church's witness to Jesus as God's decisive self-revelation; as evidenced in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures; throughout the created order; within the movement of history; and in the broader context of human relationships.

Further, we know ourselves to be created in God's own image. As creatures of God, together with the example of perfect humanity given to us in Jesus, we are called to live in right relationship with God, with one another, and with ourselves (The Great Commandment, Mark 12:29-31). As the prophet instructs, we are called to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8). This calling to live in the fullness of our God-created humanity requires that we sustain a vital relationship to God so that we may maintain the dignity of all life, and treat each other with respect.

As we increase in our awareness of the many instances of sexual misconduct occurring within as well as outside of the Church, it is imperative we recognize the following:

- Human sexuality is a gift from God for the enhancement, not the degradation, of human life.
- All powers, capacities and gifts of the human person are given by God and must be exercised with consideration and respect due to self, others and God.
- The commission of sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse constitute sin against God, against the Church, against one another, and against the integrity of the self.
- The Church, as ordained by Christ, is intended to be a Spirit-inspired arena for confronting and confessing of human sinfulness; for healing all human brokenness, including the brokenness caused by sexual violations and experienced by victims, by offenders, and by the larger witnessing community.

We recognize that while we are in need of God's redemptive grace, we must remain committed to providing just and merciful responses to instances of sexual misconduct in the church, whether understood to be exploitation, harassment, or abuse. We must acknowledge to ourselves and to God the need for restoration of what is broken and lost when any member of the body of Christ is sexually violated by another. Finally, we recognize our commission as members of Christ's body to be healing agents of justice for victims of sexual misconduct, as well as for offenders, families, congregations and others affected by such violation.

- 2) **Standards of Conduct:** The following Standards of Conduct, which underlie this policy, apply to clergy members, lay employees and unpaid ministry servants in the annual conference, such as committee members, camp counselors and conference youth workers. Additional moral and ethical expectations for ordained clergy are specified in *The Book of Discipline*. Our expectations for healthy, ethical conduct include:
- a) Persons are responsible for avoiding misconduct of a sexual nature by establishing and maintaining appropriate personal and social boundaries in all interpersonal relationships.
 - b) Persons are responsible for their conduct regarding the emotional, spiritual and physical protection of all persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority.
 - c) Persons shall strive to be as psychologically, emotionally and spiritually healthy as possible at all times, and have adequate preparation and education for helping those individuals under their care and know when to make appropriate referrals.
 - d) When bringing incidents of sexual misconduct to the attention of proper authorities, the greatest possible care shall be taken to assure that the least possible additional harm is done to the complainant, respondent, and/or victim(s), and the congregations. In no case is the person reporting expected to judge the validity of the reported complaint. Secrecy and withholding of information about sexual misconduct allows damage to continue to grow.
 - e) Misconduct of a sexual nature breaks the sacred trust that is inherent in all ministries of the Church. Such misconduct is a violation of the ministerial relationship, in which a person in a position of religious

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leadership takes advantage of, rather than protecting, another person. The General Conference names “sexual harassment and sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship as incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing and will continue its efforts to eliminate sexual harassment and abuse in the denomination and its institutions.”

- f) It is our understanding that misconduct of a sexual nature means any sexual conduct that is contrary to the ethical principles of The United Methodist Church, as defined by The Book of Discipline, or is unlawful as defined by the laws of the State of Minnesota. Misconduct of a sexual nature includes, but is not limited to, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. It is also the understanding of the Minnesota Annual Conference that retaliation in response to a report of sexual misconduct is a continuation of the original instance of the sexual misconduct.

3) Definitions of Sexual Misconduct

- a) Sexual abuse includes criminal sexual conduct or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation that is in violation of the Minnesota Criminal Sexual Conduct Code. As it applies to adult/child or vulnerable person interactions, sexual abuse is the subjection of a child or vulnerable adult by any person responsible for their care to any sexual act that is a violation of the Minnesota Criminal Sexual Conduct Code. To uphold the moral standard of The United Methodist Church as defined by this document and The Book of Discipline, no person less than 18 years of age or any vulnerable adult may give consent to sexual acts.
- b) Sexual harassment is defined by The United Methodist Church (*BOD ¶ 161 section I*) as “any unwanted sexual comment, advance or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender.” For the purposes of this policy, we acknowledge that sexual harassment may occur in any environment where the work of the church takes place.
- c) Sexual misconduct may also take the form of an abuse of power through sexual contact or activity (not limited to sexual intercourse) which exploits the vulnerability of a parishioner, client or staff person, or causes/allows those persons to engage in sexual behavior with a person who is in a professional relationship (whether paid or unpaid) to the annual conference.
- d) Sexual misconduct may also include any sexual contact or activity (not limited to sexual intercourse) between a person in a therapeutic or a counseling role/relationship with a congregant/client. It may include being asked to date the counselor or any representation by a counselor that sexual contact will help in dealing with the emotional struggles the client is having. (This is called “therapeutic deception.”) Consent by the complainant is not a defense. Such behavior is illegal under Minnesota law, as is sexual contact by a person who is, or claims to be, clergy with someone during private meetings for spiritual aid and comfort.

4) Reporting Misconduct of a Sexual Nature

It is encouraged that any instances of suspected or actual misconduct of a sexual nature on the part of the individuals named above be reported to either the bishop, one of the district superintendents or the Director of Ministries. Investigation is not the responsibility of the person reporting such misconduct.

5) Commitment to Action

- a) Seek justice in all cases of sexual misconduct;
- b) Emphasize reconciliation and resolution as the continuing goal of this process;
- c) Provide trained individuals to serve as advocates and/or support persons for all aggrieved parties including the complainant, respondent and congregation involved;
- d) Provide a program of ongoing education and training for local congregations on the nature and scope of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and sexual misconduct;
- e) Provide a series of ongoing training sessions for clergy, conference staff and volunteers which will promote proactive measures designed to lower the risk of sexual misconduct on the part of these individuals;
- f) The wide dissemination of this policy along with additional materials that will aid in the understanding of the roles and processes outlined in The Book of Discipline.

RESOURCES

Safe Gatherings “BEST PRACTICES” in Ministry

Guidelines, Policies and Procedures for the purpose of maintaining transparency, accountability, and integrity in ministry with children, youth, and/or the developmentally disabled.

Following are church-established best practices for all ministry areas. In some instances it may be impossible to adhere to them, so allow common sense and grace to prevail. These practices pertain to those serving consistently in direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. It is recommended for all leaders to be Safe Gatherings <http://www.minnesotaumc.org/safe-gatherings> certified. Recertification should be done every 3 years.

General Best Practices for all Congregations

Adults serving in ministry areas with children and youth shall have been active participants in the congregation for six months before beginning their ministry assignment and have completed a background check that demonstrates that have never been convicted of any form of child abuse.

Adult ministry workers with children and youth shall observe the “two adult rule” at all times so that no adult is left alone with children or youth on a routine basis. In unavoidable circumstances where only one adult is present, the door must be open or all present be in a space where they can be observed. It is never appropriate for an adult to be alone with an individual child at any age.

Ministry workers in all areas should wear lanyards and nametags identifying them as the designated ministry worker and there should be some sort of check in process with name tags for infants/toddlers and children for the nursery and children’s programming.

If the situation arises when two adult persons cannot be present in a nursery setting, the ministry worker should recruit another person to join them, or, at minimum, invite someone to serve as a “rover” to be readily accessible to assist in any classroom situation.

When the pastor is alone and a congregant arrives seeking spiritual care, the pastor should meet with the person where there is a space with a window and/or leave the door open to the room where the communication is occurring. Other options include asking the person to meet at a public space. If it is not a crisis, tell the congregant you are obligated by church policies to schedule the appointment when other people are in the building. If it is a crisis, call another church leader to be in the building where you meet.

When a youth leader is asked to provide transportation to a student for a youth event, and knows that they will be alone in the car with the student, the leader will always obtain parental permission before giving a ride. It is always best that a leader is not alone in a car with a student.

“BEST PRACTICES” FOR CHILDREN’S MINISTRY (Children, Age 0 – Grade 5)

During all children’s programming and events caregivers should wear the appropriate lanyard/nametag. Remember guidelines also apply to your own child while you are in your ministerial role.

Security Guidelines:

- Minimum of two unrelated care providers at all times. Care providers should not be alone with a child.
- Care providers should always have supervision or a witness present when with a child of same or opposite sex for a sustained period of time.
- Release only (birth-2nd grade) to a person with a proper pick up form. In cases of lost pickup form or any problems, the child may be released by a staff member. For those in 3rd to 5th grade, if parent designates, perhaps an older sibling can be allowed to pick up child.

Discipline Guidelines:

- Establish and post expectations and guidelines, and provide to care providers and parents.
- Praising specific behaviors you want to see in your group (i.e., “good listening”, “thank you for waiting”).
- Corporal punishment of any kind is never appropriate.
- A firm gentle voice addressing and redirecting the behavior (i.e., “you are running; walk, please”). Any words or tone that would cause a child to think he/she is a “problem”, rather than a specific behavior being addressed (i.e., screaming at a child).
- Any words that could cause feelings of condemnation or shame about any aspect of their person . . . including degrading references to anything physical, emotional, mental, or position (or station) in life, such as saying, “Are you a strong boy? Strong boys don’t cry.” Or “Shame on you.”
- Confidential parental discussion when necessary, involve church staff as appropriate.
- Age appropriate “time outs” or withdrawal from activity. Help child rejoin the group when he/she is ready using encouraging language and methods.
- Communicate through verbal and nonverbal messages that you have faith in the child’s ability to practice self-control and (after they’ve calmed) encourage him/her to explore possible solutions to the situation.

Physical Contact Guidelines:

- Appropriate physical contact: non-demanding, gentle touch of shoulders, hands, arms, head or back; sitting child on leg (appropriate only at preschool or kindergarten age level); “high fives” or shaking hands, if gentle.
- Inappropriate physical contact: kissing; demanding hugs and kisses; touching chest, genital region, upper legs, buttocks, waist, stomach; sitting child in center of your lap; sitting child between legs; sitting child above age 6 on one or both legs; opposite sex piggy back rides; seductiveness or suggestive contact.
- Physical contact of any kind which is done for the pleasure or satisfaction of care providers is never appropriate.
- Any touching used to express power or control over a child is not permitted.

Bathroom Procedures:

At ANY age, it is inappropriate to be alone with a child, especially in the bathroom.

Infant: Diapering should be done in the Nursery by a parent/legal guardian, a ministry supervisor or paid staff person only. Diapering in a secluded area or without the presence of other care providers; bathroom doors closed is never permitted.

Toddler-Potty Training: If a toddler has an “accident” in underwear/clothing, only the parent/legal guardian may change the clothing. Volunteers and staff are not to change underwear/clothing after an “accident”.

2 to 5 year old: Permission is granted to use bathroom unless special help is required. After the care provider has ensured that the bathroom is clear, the care provider should wait outside the bathroom door, which will remain slightly open. Child may require some assistance. Care providers should never be in a closed door situation with a child or “Help” without a request for assistance from the child.

Kindergarten Age or Older: Permission granted to use facility; unless special help (if a child has temporary physical limitations, i.e., broken arm, crutches, etc.) is required. After the care provider has ensured that the bathroom is clear, the care provider should wait outside the bathroom door, which will remain slightly open. Care giver should never be in a closed door situation with a child or accompany a child inside the bathroom when special help is not required.

Special Needs: Diapers or spoiled clothes should be change by a family member or an adult (preferably a staff member) with another adult as a helper.

“BEST PRACTICES” FOR YOUTH MINISTRY (Youth, Grades 6-12)

Youth ministry has a profound moral and legal obligation to reduce the possibility of abuse from ever occurring. These best practices have been formed with that obligation in mind. Abuse causes deep and sometimes lifelong psychological damage to its victims and their families. Furthermore, when abuse occurs in the context of a Christian organization, the reputations of the organization, its staff and other volunteers are jeopardized. Thank you for your support and partnership in adhering to what is outlined in these pages so that students for years to come can grow in Christ in a safe and trustworthy environment.

Guidelines for Conduct with Students Meeting with Students

All meetings, gatherings, and events associated with Youth Ministry will adhere to a two unrelated adult minimum rule.

On the occasion when a worker needs to meet individually with a student outside of regularly scheduled programs, a parental consent must first be obtained. All meetings must occur in a public place where other people are present (restaurants, coffee shops). Students and workers will meet at the public place and depart from the public place separately. If a meeting occurs during regularly scheduled program time, it must be in a common visible area.

When providing rides to students, youth workers should have a third person in the car. Although situations may require the driver to be alone in the car with a student of the same gender (e.g. picking up the first student) this should be the exception rather than the norm and parental consent must be obtained. Care should be taken to plan ahead to avoid finding oneself in these situations. Under no circumstances shall any worker be alone in a car with an individual student of the opposite gender.

As a rule, youth workers shall not be alone in a home or building with an individual student. If the situation becomes unavoidable (e.g. a student is the first to arrive or last to be picked up), the adult shall wait with the student outside the home or building. In bad weather, when meeting off site, the adult may leave the main entry or front door open and remain inside with the student in the front room or entryway. If this situation occurs, please report it to a staff member in charge of that program as soon as possible.

In group sleeping arrangements (e.g. camp cabins, ski trips, mission trips) two unrelated adults must be present with any number of students during the stated “lights out” time. Under no circumstances shall any volunteer share a bed with a student. In dorm or hotel settings, students and adults should sleep in separate rooms (connecting rooms are acceptable). Room checks will be performed at stated lights out time. There should be separate sleeping areas for males and females. Any leader who is a minor must be under direct adult supervision at all times. A leader who is a minor must be at least five years older than the students participating in the event in order to be considered a leader. When college-aged counselors are used, an adult 23 years or older must be the second adult where there are senior high youth present.

Physical Touch

Although physical affection can have an appropriate place in ministry, workers shall use discretion as to the frequency and type of physical affection they provide to students of either gender. Specifically, youth workers should refrain from giving or receiving massages of any type. Whenever possible front- to-front hugs should be avoided. Workers should never have students sit on their laps or vice-versa. Kissing of any sort is inappropriate. Touching should be in response to the need of the student and not the need of the adult. It should generally be in response to a student’s initiative. A worker shall never touch a student’s breasts, buttocks, or groin.

Corporal punishment is never permissible. Physical restraint should be used only in order to protect the health and welfare of the student, other students, volunteers or staff.

Modesty

You are an example to students in every way. For that reason strive that your dress, behavior, and body language be of the highest standard. Please be conscious of what your appearance will speak to both genders.

Disciplinary Action

If at any time your behavior towards students becomes questionable or specific expectations outlined here are violated, the steps below will be taken by the appropriate ministry leader, staff and/or SPRC team. A meeting will be scheduled with the person(s) overseeing the program in which you are volunteering. The action in question will be discussed and the guidelines in these best practices will be reviewed.

If it is determined that questionable behavior has occurred, other appropriate staff members and SPRC representatives will be contacted and will become involved. If questionable behavior continues after the meeting, a temporary or permanent removal from your volunteer position will follow. If behavior warrants immediate removal from volunteer position, the church reserves the right to enforce disciplinary action as needed. In all situations, we will communicate our purpose in discipline and keep it in confidence within the church guidelines. If you become aware of other volunteers or staff violating these guidelines, report the situation immediately to a staff member or the SPRC team.

Camping & Mission Trips with Youth

Camping & mission trips, regardless of location, are unique experiences where persons of all ages are general outside their comfort zones. Thus, persons on these trips are more vulnerable because of the new situation, away from familiar surroundings, close proximity of others and sharing experiences that are often life-changing.

It is highly recommended that adult team leaders have completed Safe Gatherings training/certification <http://www.minnesotaumc.org/safe-gatherings>.

When a single youth is part of a group, the youth should either have a room of their own or two adults (not related to one another) in the room.

If open showers are the only facilities, separate shower times for youth and adults should be designated, Youth and adults should not shower together. There should be shower monitors, and swim suits may be required for showers in some instances.

Adults should be sensitive to privacy concerns of children and youth, such as dressing and undressing in public spaces.

Two adults should be present at the work site at all times.

When travelling to different areas of the camp/mission site, there must always be at least three people (two counselors & 1 camper, 2 campers and 1 counselor).

When counseling or talking with a camper about a personal/private matter, you must do so in an open space where anyone can walk by and see what is happening.

No youth will be allowed to be alone with an adult from a host mission.

Mission/Camp team members are not to be alone with a youth from the host mission/camp.

The same boundary best practices apply to youth from host teams consistent with those for mission team members.

Recommended Ratio of Adults to Youth

Retreats/rallies/meetings	One adult: ten youth
Offsite camps/mission trips	One adult: eight youth

Whenever smaller ratios are required, the stricter requirements will be communicated to all participants, parents and sponsors prior to the event.

General Approach.

For years, people with disability were segregated from the rest of society. Because of federal legislation, persons with disability are being integrated into the mainstream of education, employment, and community activities. The present generation is growing up in situations where people with disability are a natural part of school, church and community life. Below are some general principles to keep in mind when working with the special needs population.

A person with a special need may be slower physically or mentally, but take time to get to know them. People with disabilities need to practice meeting the standards of the "normal" world while they are growing up so they can gain confidence and independence.

People with a disability do not need to be pitied. If you perceive a person with a disability as someone to be pitied, someone from whom little should be expected or demanded, probably little will come. If, on the other hand, you expect the person to succeed and grow, to learn to act independently, then chances are good that the person will grow to become successful and independent.

Help a person with special needs only when help is needed. A person with a special need may take longer to complete a certain task, but you may be surprised by what he or she can do. Too much help can become a hindrance if it robs the person of opportunities to learn and practice independence. Do not assume that a task cannot be done, and do not redo work that is not perfect. Ask if help is wanted before providing it.

With special considerations, communicate with a special needs person like you would any other person. One impairment that some volunteers have trouble with involves speech and language. Whether the communication impairment results from a physical disability such as cerebral palsy or a speech disability such as stuttering, the listener tends to anticipate what the disabled person is trying to say and not allow that person the time he or she needs to communicate. This should be avoided. Be patient, and remember that a person with a speech impairment has had to communicate with people other than you. Whenever possible, speak directly to persons with disability, using their name. Do not limit your conversation only to the parent or companion. Speak clearly and slowly, not necessarily loudly. A person with a speech impairment is not necessarily hearing impaired.

Remember that a warm smile and friendly greeting are very reassuring. There are special considerations for people with special disabilities. For example, keep in mind that people who have visual impairments depend upon what they hear and touch to bring them information about their surroundings. Provide opportunities for the visually impaired person to handle things that those with normal vision can simply look at. It is also helpful to describe new people, things, and events as they come into the person's environment. Allow time for the person to ask what is going on.

People with hearing impairments must depend on sight for most of their knowledge. Make sure the hearing impaired person can see the face of whoever is speaking; many cues are picked up through lip-reading and facial expression. Arrange for seating near the teacher or leader. Do not assume that a person understands you just because you have his or her attention. Ask whether you have been understood. People with mental impairments can get along better when directions are short and clearly stated. Break down tasks into a series of steps that can be completed in sequence. Maintain a routine, teach new procedures, and give time for practice.

EXPECTATIONS OF VOLUNTEERS

*Meet and greet your child/student and family. Welcome them and check for any last minute instructions or information that we might need.

*Participate. All volunteers and participants are expected to participate, as much as possible, in the activities of the day. Stay together. Talk with them, encourage them and include them in whatever is happening in the programming or class.

*Bathroom breaks with a child. Need two unrelated volunteers to accompany the child to the bathroom. If the participant can't go alone, simply wait for them, at the door of the bathroom.

*Help with snacks/meals. Some of our participants will need help carrying things, cutting food into manageable pieces and cleaning up after themselves.

*Have fun! This ministry is a great experience for those who attend.

Sample Electronic Communication Policy

The use of computers and electronic communications are essential tools to support (organization)'s ministry. In using (organization)'s computers and electronic communications systems, it is important for all employees/users to be aware of (organization)'s policy regarding responsible use. It is the responsibility of each User to ensure that this technology is used in a manner that 1) is responsible, professional, and legal; 2) does not compromise the confidentiality of proprietary or other sensitive information; 3) does not compromise the security of [organization]'s computer resources; and 4) is consistent with good stewardship and the mission and ministry of (organization)

Internet Access and Electronic Mail

(organization) employees and volunteers designated to have access to the Internet are required to use their access to the Internet in a legal, responsible and informed way, conforming to network etiquette, customs and courtesies.

Internet activity and email is not a private, confidential communication. The confidentiality of any message should not be assumed.

Internet activity and email should never be used in any way that may be disruptive, hurtful or offensive to others.

Use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right, which may be revoked at any time for inappropriate conduct. The willful misuse of Internet access by any employee may result in other disciplinary action, including but not limited to, termination of employment. Examples of inappropriate conduct include, but are not limited to: use of inappropriate or offensive or abusive language in either public or private messages; unlawful activities; gambling, defamation; infringement of copyrights; misrepresentation of oneself or (organization); logging on or accessing obscene, pornographic, sexually explicit, racist or violent sites; pirating software or transmitting software programs or other copyrighted or trademarked material; engaging in transactions or activity for personal financial gain: jeopardizing (organization)'s tax-exempt status; creating unauthorized contractual liability for (organization); violating any (organization) policy or procedure: engaging in any activity or communication that is inconsistent with norms of professional and business conduct; and sending messages that might result in congestion or disruption of networks and systems.

Employees must abide by security policies, procedures and guidelines in their use of the Internet, and are to refrain from practices which might jeopardize (organization)'s computers, data, network, systems security or work in general. Employees must guard against computer viruses and security breaches of any kind.

No Privacy

The Internet is not a secure communication channel and should not be used for sending or receiving confidential or sensitive information.

Employees/users do not have a personal privacy right in any matter created, received, sent, or stored on (organization) computer resources, whether or not the matter is designated as private or confidential. (organization) reserves the right to access all (organization)-owned/provided computer resources for the purpose of supporting its mission and ministry, assuring compliance with statutory requirements, as well as internal policies supporting the performance of internal investigations, and assisting with the management of (organization)'s information systems.

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee of (organization) reserves the right to monitor and review email messages, Internet access and general computer usage of employees, without prior notice. This includes the right to monitor Internet sites visited, duration of employee's Internet use and files which have been viewed, accessed, or downloaded. E-mail messages and Internet access are not private, and employees should not consider their email messages and Internet access to be private. An employee's access code or password does not give him or her any right to privacy with respect to using the [organization]'s email and Internet systems.

Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. An employee who discovers a violation of this policy is expected to report it to the Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.

General computer usage and electronic communications resources of non-church employees may be monitored by the appropriate representatives appointed by the Administrative Council of (organization).

SAMPLE COMPUTER USER CONTRACT/USE AGREEMENT

(Organization) holds the expectation that all users of church-provided computers, internet access, email and other electronic communications will exercise appropriate judgment and maintain high ethical standards. Access to church equipment and services is a privilege, not a right.

(Organization) reserves the right, at its discretion, to review any user's electronic files and messages stored on or sent from church computers and servers to the extent necessary to ensure electronic media and services are being used in compliance with the law, this policy and other church policies.

(Organization) may routinely gather logs for most electronic activities or monitor employee communications directly for the following purposes:

1. Cost analysis;
2. Resource allocation;
3. Optimum technical management of information resources; and
4. Detecting patterns of use that indicate employees or volunteers are violating church policies or engaging in illegal activity.

Appropriate members of the Staff Parish Relations Committee may be appointed to review employee computer and communications activity.

Employees and volunteers should not assume electronic communications are completely private. Accordingly, if they have sensitive information to transmit, they should use other means.

By signing this user agreement, I acknowledge that I have read this agreement, will abide by it and have received a copy of it.

Name

Date

3 Simple Rules for Social Media



Social media guidelines for Minnesota United Methodists

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, lived by and taught three simple rules: Do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God. Those simple rules can be applied to many facets of life, including our use of social media. The Minnesota Conference's Extended Cabinet supports the use of social media and believes it can be a valuable tool for ministry. We affirm these guidelines to help use social media in a manner that positively represents the church, the Gospel, and Jesus Christ and that helps us fulfill our Gospel imperatives to grow in love of God and neighbor, reach new people, and heal a broken world.

No. 1: Do no harm

One of the benefits of social media is that it provides the opportunity to share views, thoughts, joys, and concerns about all areas of life. Our social media contributions can be very effective tools for ministry if we apply caution before we post. We will be careful that our posts are not "doing harm" by insulting or damaging the reputation of others. We will make sure our posts are respectful and in good taste. And we will remember that everything we post—status updates, comments, tweets, blogs—becomes public immediately after we click "send" (even if we're using a limited-access setting). We can't take it back once it's out there, so we will use discernment with everything we post.

TO THINK ABOUT

- Is the post "doing harm" to the reputation of the church, Christ, or another person or organization?
- Can the post be interpreted as harmful, offensive, rude, or distasteful? If I'm posting photos, do I have the permission of the people pictured?
- If using the post as an outlet to vent, what's the most productive and least harmful way to seek resolution or reconciliation? Is there a less public, more respectful way to do so?

No. 2: Do good

Social media can serve as an effective method of church networking and communicating. It has the potential to have an encouraging influence on our congregations and communities and to serve as a powerful tool for delivering the Gospel message to a large audience that extends beyond our contact list. It's also a great way to share news about our church and ministry—and to invite others to join us in worship and service. Additionally, it can be a useful tool for obtaining feedback and ideas from our audience and can be used to gain insight for sermons, Bible study topics, worship times, and needs of the community. The "good" and positive uses of social media are endless.

TO THINK ABOUT

- Can the post be described as "good"?
- Will it help the kingdom and fellow believers? How will it be perceived by non-believers? How will the post be received by people with different cultural or faith backgrounds?
- Are we communicating effectively by asking questions in addition to providing information?

No. 3: Stay in love with God

Social media is a great way to find meaningful devotional materials, thought-provoking blogs, inspiring worship videos and media resources, and current articles and tools for our ministry. Users have reported that their social media usage helps keep them informed and enthusiastic about their ministry on a daily basis. While it can definitely help us "stay in love with God," it also can be very distracting. We will make sure our use of social media does not occupy so much of our time that we are no longer fully participating in meaningful devotion, worship, Bible study, and conversations with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Social media can serve as a tool to aid, promote, and conduct discussions, studies, and devotional times but should not be our primary source of interaction with the world.

TO THINK ABOUT

- How is social media helping me to stay in love with God? How is it hindering me?
- How am I helping others stay in love with God by my social media contributions?
- How am I engaging in meaningful interactions that don't involve social media? When is personal dialogue more beneficial?

Our character and faith are reflected in each post we make, so if we are unsure about something, we won't post it.